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File No. 172/11/24.

ISRAEL.

ARCHIVAL ACTION.

BASEMENT

File No.

KEY PAPERS ON FILE.

(e.g. Cabinet papers, Policy matters, &c.)—

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AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION
LAGOS

In reply quote No. 221/6/16

Memorandum No. 466

5 September 1974.

The Secretary,
Department of Foreign Affairs,
CANBERRA.

172/11/24

NIGERIA/ISRAEL RELATIONS

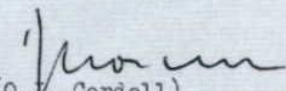
Before his departure from Lagos, which had to be helped along by a direct request from the police to leave, the PLO representative reportedly said in his disgruntlement that the Israelis obviously still had influence in the Nigerian Ministry of External Affairs. There is probably some truth in this. You will recall our memorandum No. 637 of 5 November 1973 about the reasons for Nigeria's belated break in relations with Israel.

2. According to the Finnish Embassy here, which looks after Israeli interests in Nigeria, the Israelis were indeed popular in Nigeria (at least in the south) and their Ambassador particularly active and effective. As a result of the basically good relations which existed between the two governments, Israeli businessmen have continued to operate extensively in Nigeria, particularly in Lagos, and maintain wide contacts through which they are able to make Israel's interests known.

3. While Israel's diplomatic effort in Africa in future is likely to be more limited than before and concentrated on key countries and on those countries with which it retains commercial ties, it is still premature to talk of a resumption in diplomatic relations between Israel and Nigeria. Having attracted attention for its tardiness in breaking relations with Israel, it is unlikely Nigeria will wish to be among the forerunners of those in Africa involved in any resumption of relations. Moreover unlike a number of other African countries Nigeria has not suffered economically from the oil price war triggered off by last year's middle east troubles. Accordingly feeling here is that Nigeria will only resume relations with Israel after other African countries who have felt the pinch do so, in particular Ghana, Kenya and Senegal.

4. The Finns say that the task of representing Israeli interests here has been trouble free and uncomplicated. The only moment of concern arose at the end of last year when the Nigerian police warned the Embassy of the arrival by road from Dahomey of two Palestinian agents travelling on Libyan passports but who were soon escorted out of Nigeria.

5. A copy of this memorandum has been sent to Accra, Dar es Salaam, Nairobi and Tel Aviv.


(O.J. Cordell)
First Secretary

RESTRICTED



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION
LAGOS

In reply quote No. 221/6/16
Memorandum No. 621

2 November 1973

Nov 9 10 32 AM '73

ENCLOSURE ATTACHED

The Secretary,
Department of Foreign Affairs,
CANBERRA

172/11/24

F.
NIGERIA - ISRAEL
BREAKING OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

....

Enclosed for your information is a copy of the text of the statement released by the Federal Military Government announcing that as from 25 October Nigeria had broken diplomatic relations with Israel.

2. As officers have only just returned from an official tour of the northern states of Nigeria, it has not yet been possible to prepare detailed comments. These will follow in next week's bag.

(Keith Baker)
First Secretary

Orig sent to NAM.

6.12/11.

STATEMENT BY THE FEDERAL MILITARY
GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA ON THE MIDDLE
EAST SITUATION

25TH OCTOBER, 1973

Since the outbreak of war in the Middle East on October 6, 1973, the Federal Military Government has maintained contact with all the parties involved, including the two super-powers, with a view to lending its support to all efforts that would re-establish peace in the region.

The Federal Military Government was, therefore, particularly gratified to learn of the acceptance by the parties to the conflict, of the Security Council resolution No. 338 of the 22nd October, 1973, calling for a ceasefire. The Government is particularly pleased to note the magnanimous and far-sighted action of President Sadat of Egypt, in readily accepting the ceasefire proposal, in the interest of genuine peace in the Middle East, and with a high sense of responsibility and outstanding statesmanship. The Federal Military Government of Nigeria wishes to express its full support and solidarity with the Government and people of Egypt in this momentous decision, and reaffirms its full understanding and endorsement of the reasons that led Egypt to take up arms in the defence of its legitimate rights. The Nigerian Government had repeatedly stated that it could not subscribe to any policy that conferred legitimacy on the acquisition of territory by force of arms. It also recognises that no people, and no nation, can tolerate in silence the occupation of its territories by foreign forces.

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In this regard, the Nigerian Government had repeatedly called upon the Government of Israel to withdraw from the territory of Egypt, a member country of the Organization of African Unity, which the Israeli forces occupied in their pre-emptive and sudden attack upon Egypt in 1967. Since the outbreak of the most recent hostilities, the Nigerian Government had also made it abundantly clear to the Government of Israel that Nigerians could not tolerate a situation in which the territories of a sister African country would continue to be further violated. The Israeli Government was specifically informed that, while the Nigerian Government was, for the moment, prepared to continue to maintain contact with Israel in the hope that such contacts would provide opportunities for counselling moderation and restraint, in the circumstances, Nigerian opinion would not accept a situation in which Israeli forces either attacked civilian populations and urban centres in Egypt, or any further infraction of Egyptian sovereignty by an attempt to establish an Israeli military presence on the West Bank of the Suez.

In the last few days, confirmation has been received of the extent of Israeli incursion into the West Bank of the Suez and the occupation of a further area of nearly 500 square miles of Egyptian territory, to which the Israelis could not, by any length of imagination, claim a legitimate right. This confirmation has now necessitated an immediate review of Nigeria's relations with Israel, since the action of the Israeli Government, in this regard, in seizing and further occupying large areas of Egypt, and investing them

/with substantial

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with substantial military forces, indicated its contempt for African and world opinion.

The Nigerian Government has made it abundantly clear that Nigeria is interested in supporting all legitimate moves designed to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, provided that the legitimate rights and prerogatives of Egypt and all other Arab countries, are adequately protected in the arrangement for such a lasting peace. Nigeria is convinced that the recent action of Israeli forces in crossing into the West Bank of the Suez and in taking advantage of the early stages of the ceasefire to further extend and consolidate its hold on large areas of Egyptian territory, is not conducive to the promotion of a peaceful and just settlement in the area, and constitutes ample evidence of bad faith on the part of Israel.

Consequently, the Federal Military Government of Nigeria had decided to break diplomatic relations with the Government of Israel with immediate effect.

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DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, CANBERRA.

Name of Paper INWARD SAVINGRAM 32 File No. 172/11/24
Published at Lagos Date 20-9-65

Relations with Israel. 172/11/24

7. The Premiers of Eastern and Mid-Western Nigeria, Dr. Michael Okpara and Chief Dennis Osadebay, have criticised the statement by the Premier of Northern Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello, that "Israel does not exist" (reported in our Savingram 30). Dr. Okpara said that his Government and party (the N.C.N.C.) would back any move to resolve the Israeli-Arab dispute. He appealed to Nigerians not to take sides in the conflict.



16 NOV 1964
 File No. 172/11/24
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AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION,
LAGOS.

In reply quote No. 225/23.
 Memorandum No. 600

6th November, 1964.

The Secretary,
 Department of External Affairs,
CANBERRA. A.C.T.

VISIT TO NIGERIA BY FOREIGN MINISTER OF ISRAEL.

I refer to our memorandum 586 of 30th October 1964. ^{172/11/24.}

2. At a press conference on 29th October Mrs. Meir outlined Israel's stand on major world problems. On the Israeli-Arab dispute the Foreign Minister announced Israel's desire to discuss the dispute with Arab leaders over the Conference table. Israel was prepared to attend a conference "at any place, at any time and without any precondition". Israel was not opposed to regional groupings such as the Pan-Arab movement and the O.A.U. "provided they unite, federate or co-operate for constructive purposes and not to threaten the sovereignty of others".
3. On the question of the admission of Communist China to the United Nations Mrs. Meir said Israel believed that all countries have a right to be admitted to the United Nations and China should not be an exception.
4. On Southern Rhodesia the Foreign Minister stated that Israel would be the last to support a policy of discrimination against a people.
5. All friends of Africa and the Congo should help the Congo solve her problems and not interfere in her internal affairs. The Congo "needs to be aided, not exploited".
6. On 30th October the Nigerian Prime Minister, Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa condemned the attitude of those alleged to have protested against Mrs. Meir's visit and her lecture to the National Council of Nigerian Women's Societies. "This attitude looks like interference in our internal affairs". The policy of Nigeria was to respect any nation that recognized her sovereignty.

Mr. Lee
17/11/64
UNZ
EA } para 3.
copy to N.E. for file
Min. Dr. A.S.
Open for 307/27/1/
+ 107/27/1/
G. Allen
 (G. Allen)
 Third Secretary.



DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION,
LAGOS.

In reply quote No. 225/23.

Memorandum No. 586.

6 NOV 1984
File No. 172/11/24
DOM. INDEX 800 INDEX

The Secretary,
Department of External Affairs,
CANBERRA. A.C.T.

VISIT TO NIGERIA BY THE ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER.

Mrs. Golda Meir, the Israeli Foreign Minister arrived in Lagos on 27th October for a two day visit. As was to be expected the visit provided a further battleground for the Arab-Israeli dispute and resulted in a Note being sent to the Ambassador from the United Arab Republic protesting of the interference by Arab missions in Lagos in the internal affairs of Nigeria.

2. On 24th October an organization called the Muslim Council under the Chairmanship of Alhaji A.W. Elias, (who had just returned from a three months visit to Arab countries) decided to stage a protest march against the visit. In announcing the decision Alhaji Elias stated that the proposed demonstration was not "....against the Nigerian Government inviting Mrs. Meir to Nigeria or against Mrs. Meir as a person but we are against the atrocious acts of the Israeli Government against the Arabs in Palestine."

3. On her arrival in Lagos Mrs. Meir refused to comment on the Arab-Israeli dispute as she said it was never her custom to discuss such issues while in host countries. During her visit the Foreign Minister paid a courtesy call on the President, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, addressed a meeting of the National Council of Nigerian Women's Societies, called on the Nigerian Foreign Minister and attended a reception.

4. In the usual exchange of speeches President Azikiwe in assuring Mrs. Meir that her visit to Nigeria was highly appreciated stated ".... the foreign policy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is based on the pursuit of prosperity for our nation, through peaceful co-existence among the nations of the earth, motivated by a spirit of good neighbourliness". In reply Mrs. Meir stated - "Ever since Israel was re-established as an independent State our policy has been based on peace with all peace loving nations, irrespective of their internal regime, on freedom for all peoples and upon the non-interference on the internal affairs of other States. It was therefore with particular gratification that I listened to the important statement you have just made. Your people and ours have a common history of persecution and discrimination and of untold sufferings."

5. The most significant aspect of the visit however was the decision of the wives of the eight Arab Ambassadors in Nigeria to protest against the invitation extended by the National Council of Nigerian Women's Societies to the Foreign Minister to address the Society. The wives, all honorary members, in a letter to the Society stated - "It was indeed a surprise to us that an invitation has been extended to a representative of a country that has been and still is aggressive to the Arabs of Palestine, overlooking the simplest principles of human rights and ignoring the numerous decisions of the United Nations."

Copy to N.East for file.

6. "It is indeed regrettable that when all the Arab States stand by the African peoples in their struggle against imperialism and discrimination in Africa to find an honourable society like the National Council of Women's Societies receiving a representative of an aggressive country combined of all the evil forces of imperialism and racial discrimination that all Africans are suffering

7. "The ladies of the Arab Diplomatic Corps and the Arab community express their deepest regret for this partial stand taken and they denounce this attempt by a Social Society meddling in controversial political issues."

8. As was to be expected the Nigerian Press, which in effect means the Lagos press, strongly criticized the interference of the Arab Embassies in the visit. The Independent Daily Times referred to efforts of the Middle Easterners to disrupt the visit culminating in the proposed demonstration and the letter and stated - "Israel is a friendly State here in Nigeria. Our students are training there and some of our Governments are in business partnership with Israel."

9. "Furthermore, Nigeria is a sovereign State and reserves the right to choose her own friends."

10. "What business therefore, have any embassies, either moral or legal to intervene and dictate to this country who should be her friends?"

11. "And does it not degenerate the accepted practices of international relations for a foreign mission to embarrass the host country?"

12. The pro-N.C.W.S. paper the West African Pilot stated - "We think that Arab Ambassadors over-reached themselves when they organized their wives to write a letter of protest to the National Council of Women's Societies. They allowed themselves to be found out. It is against convention for diplomats to engaged in politics outside their country, but in Nigeria they have meddled with our internal affairs with impunity."

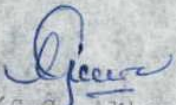
13. "Alhaji Balewa is not Prime Minister of the world of Islam. He is Prime Minister of ~~Israel~~. And he must stand up to the Arabs and tell them where they err. Nigeria demands an apology from these meddlers in our affairs. Let them be expelled from this country."

14. In a Third Person Note addressed to the Ambassador of the U.A.R. and printed in the Government owned Morning Post, the Nigerian Ministry of External Affairs referred to a complaint received from the National Council of Women's Societies and stated Government support for the policy of non-alignment and non-interference in internal affairs of other States and therefore "...views with great concern and seriousness the subtle attempt being made by some friendly countries to disturb the normal relationships of friendship existing between the State of Israel and Nigeria and particularly regards the joint memorandum submitted as constituting an undue and unwarranted interference in the internal affairs of Nigeria. The Ministry wishes to state categorically that it will not tolerate any such interference"

15. The visit itself is significant in that Nigeria as a moderate has shown where it stands on the Israeli question in spite of the pressure at the recent non-aligned Conference in Cairo. The Nigerian Foreign Minister Wachuku returned to Lagos for the visit and will return to Aba on Mrs. Meir's departure.

Wachuku has recently been in disfavour with the N.C.N.C. and this effort on his behalf may help to heal the wounds. Okpara in a recent speech claimed that he was "almost an Israelite" and relations between Israel and Eastern Nigeria are close.

16. There is no doubt that the Arab Embassies in Nigeria have been conducting a slur campaign against Israel. The nature of the country lends itself to the dispute and the Nigerian Government has been consciously avoiding controversial statements on foreign policies in an effort to prevent further splits between the Muslim dominated North and the South. This is even more important in an election year. The publication of the Note from the Ministry of External Affairs is unusual but in the circumstances it appears as the most appropriate way of reprimanding the Arab Embassies and satisfying all injured or outraged parties. It is felt that the Arab countries will in future need to be a little more discreet in their propaganda.


(G.C. Allen)
Acting High Commissioner).